

Penitence  
by Kirook

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Summary: Mendicant Bias chooses to atone for his actions in a different way, and in doing so he changes the course of history.  
AU.

## 1. The Message

A/N: Hello everyone, this is my first fanfic on this site! It asks the question, "What if Mendicant Bias had tried to atone for joining the Flood in a different way?" Answer: Things turn out a bit differently. Note that a few details about the story have been changed; the first one that shows up is that Thel 'Vadam is a Shipmaster in 2524. Other than that I've stayed true to the source material. Enjoy!

Oh, and I do not own Halo, but all OCs are mine.

Thel 'Vadam, Shipmaster and Elite Warrior of the Covenant Empire during the Twenty-Third Age of Doubt, was hearing rumors.

Rumors that Covenant ships had encountered a new race. Rumors that a new member would soon be accepted into the Covenant.

Rumors of a race called "human".

Thel did not know what to make of the rumors. A new race joining the Covenant, a new race to walk The Path? But he had his misgivings. What if they proved unworthy, and had to be cleansed like so many before them?

He was snapped out of his reverie by a young Sangheili Minor.  
"Shipmaster, the Supreme Commander has contacted us!"

Thel flexed his mandibles in the Sangheili version of a frown. \_What is the meaning of this? The Supreme Commander only contacts us to brief us for missions, and our next operation is not scheduled for cycles. \_Nevertheless, he was being contacted by a superior, so he turned on his holodisplay to accept the message. It projected a

life-size image of the Commander into the air in front of him.

The Shipmaster touched a fist to his chest in a traditional Sangheili gesture of respect. "Greetings, Commander."

"Greetings, Shipmaster 'Vadamee," replied his superior, returning the gesture. "No doubt you are wondering about the reasoning behind my message, so I will be brief: our new mission is considered to be of such import that the Hierarchs themselves will be briefing us on High Charity. Thus, we have been recalled there. A similar order has been given to all operating Covenant fleets. The Fleet Masters, Field Masters and Supreme Commanders of each fleet are to report to the Hierarchs directly; all other personnel have two cycles to rest and prepare before we embark again."

Thel's eyes widened. To say such a thing was unprecedeted would be an egregious understatement. Rare was the time any given fleet was summoned to the Covenant's capital, let alone all of them. "Does this have anything to do with this new race there have been rumors about-the humans?"

The Supreme Commander chuckled. "Your insight is correct, but if anyone asks, you do not know of any new races. The existence of humanity, as they call themselves, is known to only a select few. Or at any rate, it is supposed to be. Shipmaster 'Vadamee, you will join the fleet on its way to the rendezvous with High Charity. Supreme Commander 'Lataree out."

Thel looked around at his bridge crew. "You heard the Commander. Set course for High Charity!"

Upon arrival at the Covenant's holy city, 'Vadamee and his Sangheili brethren made their way to the barracks, where they could rest and recuperate before their mysterious new mission. Thel kept a journal in which he recorded his thoughts on the Covenant religion and the Great Journey, and he wished to use some of his spare time to create an entry. However, his thoughts on this particular day took somewhat of a different path than the piety and devotion he usually displayed.

*\_My last mission culminated in the demise of a heretic faction of various Covenant races. While this in itself is unremarkable, my experience during the battle was decidedly not. Many heretics spout Doarmir dung about how the Journey is a lie and the Prophets are leading us all astray, but these...these provided a true challenge to my faith. Who among our number truly knows what it is to walk the Great Journey? What defines heresy, as opposed to speaking one's mind? I leave this battle troubled, my faith in the Journey shaken. I would like to say that I will emerge from this challenge stronger, but I cannot expel these doubts from my mind.*  
*>I must ensure that this entry never reaches the eyes of those more pious than I.</em>*

Thel 'Vadamee deactivated the datapad that he had used to write his journal entry and slept.

His fitful rest was disturbed, however, by the distinct three-tone of his datapad receiving a communication. He checked it, and a message appeared on his screen:

\*\*HISTORY CIRCLING \*\*\*\*BACK UPON US.\*\*

The gears of the Universe spin further  
>and further apart.<br>Ever greater grows the gulf between souls,  
>And distance gives false hope of safety<br>But for the grim tidings  
this messenger bears:  
><strong>The enemy is almost upon us.<br>\*\*Closing in from all sides,  
>Moving faster than the light<br>it snuffs with its passage,  
>Time echoes with the news of destruction.<br>History winding back  
upon itself.  
>Waves of an army march this way in unison,<br>Suffering and  
corruption are its battle cries.  
>For I have known this darkness<br>and felt its embrace once before-  
>Horror best laid to rest.<br>\*\*Yet a Journey must commence.  
><strong>Look for the signs, the keepers of the flame.  
>They will lead you to war, and perhaps, to  
victory.<br>-05-032-MB

Thel almost dropped the datapad in astonishment. \_What...how...\_ He was unable to form a coherent thought for a moment. \_What could this mean? Has someone-or something-detected my near-blasphemous writings?\_ And what enemy...what horror does it speak of?  
>As he stared at the datapad, he realized that the message was open for response-most unusual in and of itself, but especially coming from this mystery messenger. He responded with haste. Seven words:<p>

\_What do you know that I don't?\_

No sooner had he sent the message than it was returned.

\_05-032-MB: Many things, but most are irrelevant. Events have been set in motion. They must be prevented.\_

\_Thel: Who are you? What are you?\_

\_05-032-MB: One who wishes to show you that your path of "salvation" will end only in destruction, as it did for the Forerunners long ago.\_

\_Thel: You are a heretic!\_

\_05-032-MB: And you are a hypocrite. You have your own doubts about this "Great Journey", do you not?\_

\_Thel: ...\_

\_05-032-MB: You wished to know who I was... I think you would not be so quick to label me "heretic" if you knew. Your allies know me as "Oracle". My creators knew me as Mendicant Bias. I committed a grave sin against them, one that led to their fall. I must atone for it. And you will be my agent.\_

A/N: Short, I know, but I kind of wanted to end on this note; I'll probably be doing longer chapters as the story develops. SPARTAN chapters will start popping up soon, as they get their augmentations

and start to be deployed. And I think most devoted Halo fans knew who Thel 'Vadam's mystery messenger was as soon as you saw the serial number. Oh, and as for the poem, it's from the Halo 3 Iris marketing campaign; I co-opted it and used it as material for Mendicant Bias. More Iris items will appear in Mendicant's communications, 'cause they're so awesome and ominous and Forerunner-y. New chapter coming up!

## 2. The Heretics

Thel's mind nearly exploded with questions, but the one he decided on was:

\_Of what sin do you speak?\_

\_05-032-MB: A betrayal millennia old. I who was created to be their protector instead sent them into the grasp of their enemy.\_

Thel nearly crushed the datapad in anger. \_I shall hear no more of your blasphemies! The Forerunners became gods!\_

\_05-032-MB: You insist upon continuing to be misled. My creators did not ascend, they fell.

He stopped. \_Fell?\_

\_05-032-MB: Yes. Because of me. This is my sin. This is the burden I carry, one that becomes heavier with each second of passing ages.\_

\_Thel: Enough riddles. What happened to the Forerunners, and what was your part in it?\_

\_05-032-MB: Good. You wish to know the truth of the Forerunners. Then you shall learn.

><em>

>And Mendicant Bias told him the tale of the Forerunners, the Flood, and the Halo Rings.<p>

Thel was speechless, holding the datapad in numb fingers.

\_05-032-MB: I destroyed the Forerunners, not directly but through my actions. But now I have a chance to be forgiven for the unforgivable. A new race must rise to claim the Mantle. They are the torchbearers of a new future, a future born from the seeds of the past that once was. They are called "human".

This time Thel really did drop the pad. It landed on the floor with a soft 'clunk', and as it spun on the ground, a new message appeared on the screen.

\_05-032-MB: Your so-called "Prophets" have come into contact with this race. They wish to hide the truth of the humans' status. If we do not act, the Reclaimers of the Mantle will be destroyed, along with any hope of the new beginning they represent.\_

The young Sangheili who was about to become a heretic picked up the pad. And what of this parasite, this "Flood"?

\_05-032-MB: Contained, for now.\_

\_Thel: It still exists?!\_

\_05-032-MB: In quarantine, where it can do no more harm. There are facilities in which ancillas [sic/translate: AIs] study and catalogue them, in the effort to create a cure. They are in stasis in all of these places. But we have discussed enough. Now is the time for action.\_

\_It is," said Thel, out loud and on the datapad. \_Oracle, can you access High Charity's communications network?\_

\_05-032-MB: I already have.\_

\_Thel: Excellent. Broadcast this conversation to every screen, communicator and computer console on the station, but keep my identity hidden. If I am found, the consequences will be dire.\_

There was a momentary pause, then:\_ It is done. Wait...\_

\_Thel: What is it?\_

\_05-032-MB: Ancillary integrity compromised. Intruder classification: Physical entity, \_Ophis congregatio, \_species official name: Lekgolo. Rebooting to preserve vital systems from short-circuit. \_Another pause. \_Reboot complete, but our signal was tracked during the period that I was disabled. Make haste to the Forerunner Keyship at the station's center. Hostile forces en route.\_

Thel wasted no time arming and armoring himself, taking a carbine, two plasma rifles and his energy sword before powering up his shields and active camouflage and moving out.

\_+05-032-MB: I can use your armor's auditory sensors to communicate with you.+\_

Thel gave a grunt of agreement before turning a sharp right, evading a passel of pursuing Jiralhanae. He drew his carbine as he ran, drawing closer to the Forerunner Keyship at High Charity's center.

Then everything went to hell.

+Ancillary integrity compromised. The Lekgolo entity continues to interfere. I am cut off from essential systems. And the last data I acquired from the consoles suggests that high-ranking Jiralhanae have been dispatched.+\_

"How high-ranking?"

\_+Your pursuers include Jiralhanae Captain Ultras, Jiralhanae Bodyguards and a Chieftain named Maccabeus.+\_

Thel's sharp gasp must have registered in the COM, because Mendicant Bias replied, \_+What is the significance of this?+\_

"Maccabeus is not simply \_a \_Chieftain, he is \_the \_Chieftain. Every

Brute who now breathes answers to him."

\_+That is indeed a problem. I will attempt to redirect them.\_+

"Please do."

Thel kept running, dodging past a pair of Kig-Yar that tried to intercept him, then ducking under the grabbing fist of a low-ranking Jiralhanae. He noticed something out of the corner of his eye, and frowned. \_Could it be... no, that is ridiculous. \_He took another turn, racing towards the Keyship.

\_+Curious.\_+

"What is curious?"

\_+That I am receiving readings analogous to those emitted by a cloaked Covenant ship, but the radiation profile is off. Ah, now it has escaped me. No matter, I will attempt to acquire it again.\_+

Thel raced through a back alley, coming out in a central square... and then he stopped cold. Seven Active Camouflage blurs resolved into unusually armored Brutes wielding Plasma Rifles, Spikers and Maulers, all aimed directly at him. He aimed his carbine, trying to decide which to neutralize first, but then he heard heavy footsteps marching his way.

Maccabeus, Chieftain of the Brutes, lumbered out of a side street, wielding the Fist of Rukt and staring at the Sangheili with murder in his eyes.

"Thel 'Vadam! For the crimes of heresy, apostasy and blasphemy against the Journey, I place you under arrest. You will be delivered to the custody of the Hierarchs for judgment. May you burn in all the hells that ever were!"

\* \* \*

><p>Some distance away, Spec Ops Ultra N'tho 'Sraomee and Shipmaster Rtas 'Vadumee watched helplessly as their comrade was taken into custody.</p>

"We should aid our brother," hissed 'Sraomee.

"We should. But we cannot," replied Rtas sadly. "The Chieftain of the Jiralhanae is there, and we cannot fight him alone. We need allies."

"Allies of what sort? The Prophets are turning their wrath against the Sangheili as we speak!"

"N'tho, it should be obvious. I am a Shipmaster. I command a ship. What does any ship need to function?"

N'tho's mandibles opened wide in a Sangheili grin. "A crew."

"A crew undyingly loyal to its Shipmaster above all else," elaborated 'Vadumee. "And with a ship, we can travel-we can go forth and gather

forces."

But 'Sraomee was having another thought. "Thel has invoked the Prophets' ire. They believe him a heretic. We will help him, but when we do, we may bring something upon ourselves that may be irreversible."

"Did you see the dialogue that appeared upon our screens? The other person in the conversation was an Oracle! If a creation of the Forerunners themselves tells us that the Journey is a lie..."

"It said it was responsible for their destruction."

"Yes. Their destruction. Not their ascension, not their rise to godhood... their destruction. And it believes this is its repentance. Who are we to deny it?"

N'tho growled. "You speak of rebellion!"

"Against a Covenant poised to cast us aside. Besides, how can we say the Oracle did not speak the truth?"

N'tho sighed. "We must be careful. This is unsteady ground we tread. It would not do to slip."

"That it would not."

\* \* \*

><p>No sooner had the <em>Divine Radiance <em>left its dock when three Jiralhanae-commanded corvettes detached from their own and gave chase. Rtas groaned. "We just had to open our mandibles. Bring us about, bearing two-zero-zero by one-three-zero, and charge lateral aft plasma lines!"

"It is done," replied the two Sangheili crewmen in unison.

One of the corvettes was now between its companion and the battlecruiser, preventing the third from firing. This didn't stop the other two, however, from unleashing everything they had in the way of plasma weaponry. They proceeded to do just that as the Divine Radiance followed suit, filling the space between them with the searing flame from which the larger ship took its name. The first corvette was overwhelmed by the Radiance's firepower, and the plasma torpedoes blasted through it, causing it to list and crash into its partner. Two of the corvettes were out of the fight. However, the Elites hadn't reckoned on High Charity's defenses.

Pulse lasers lanced out of concealed turrets on the face of the city/moon, impacting the retreating battlecruiser simultaneously with another bombardment from the remaining corvette. The combined assault penetrated Divine Radiance's weakened shielding, and the ship took a pounding from pulse lasers and light plasma weaponry.

"Damage report!" demanded Rtas as the ship rocked from the blasts.

"Fires in sections One and Two, hull breaches on multiple decks. Sealing afflicted areas now. Forward plasma lines have also been

disabled. Engines are leaking plasma."

'Vadumee growled. This was not good. Another hit like that and they would be dead in space. "Helmsman, take us into Slipspace. We must evade the Jiralhanae and High Charity's defenses." As he said this, another wave of four corvettes took off from the station and joined the chase. "Make haste!"

Sangheili were not good at running away, but the beleaguered ship escaped into Slipspace nevertheless, five Jiralhanae corvettes hot on its heels.

\* \* \*

><p>UNSC Space<br>0915 Earth Standard Time (GMT)  
>18.4 light years from Harvest<p>

Aboard the UNSC prowler Backstage Pass, all hell was about to break loose.

"Slipspace rupture detected," noted Joyeuse, the ONI AI assigned to the ship.

"One of ours? There aren't any UNSC ships scheduled to come through here for weeks!" replied Kevin Alton, the prowler's captain and ONI attache. "Why would anything besides us be out here right now?"

"Because," said Joyeuse grimly, "it's not a UNSC ship."

"The hell... Joyeuse. Explain. Now. I have no time for BS."

"There isn't much to explain. You know what, just look."

Alton did-and he nearly fell out of his chair.

It was an alien spaceship. A UFO, for lack of a better term. Here. In UNSC space. And it looked very large, very powerful...

He stopped.

And very broken. The ship looked like it had gone through hell. Blue and pink fire gouted from all of the many holes ad tears in the smooth purple alloy, it was listing like it had just taken a hit from a Super MAC and its engines were flickering on and off. It was a wonder the thing had even managed to get into Slipspace at all. But even in its nearly-destroyed state, it looked like it could take on several growers. If they turned out to be hostile, the UNSC would be left without warning about a dangerous alien menace. But if they were friendly...

Alton made his decision. "Uncloak and hail that ship, I want a line to its captain ten minutes ago. Joyeuse, are you familiar with the Voyager probe that went out in the early twentieth century?"

"Captain Alton, don't ask a question if you already know the answer," chuckled the AI. "I take it you want me to send a copy of the first contact engraving it carried?"

"Showoff," Alton grumbled, which Joyeuse took for a yes. "Disarm all weapons systems. It's not like we'd be able to hurt them anyway, but maybe they'll see it as a gesture of good intentions. Keep the engines up, though, I want to be able to bug out in case we're unpleasantly surprised. And get a message off to HIGHCOM. They need to know about this."

"Communications with unidentified vessel established, sir," reported Joyeuse and the comms officer almost simultaneously.

"Good; did they get the Voyager plate?" Alton inquired.

"It would seem so... and here they are," announced Joyeuse, as a hologram of the alien commander appeared on Alton's screen.

Somehow, subconsciously, Alton had been expecting the stereotypical little-green-men-from-Mars. He mentally slapped himself. That stereotype was ludicrous for any number of reasons; he had no reason at all to believe the aliens would be anything like that.

They...weren't.

Huge and reptilian, the shortest on the aliens' bridge stood two meters tall. Their jaws were split into four mandibles, which flexed and moved in pairs or all at once. Their feet were a strange combination of hooves and talons. They had enormous, four-finger hands with which they manipulated elaborate holographic controls or gripped strange weapons with glowing lights and sweeping curves. Their leader looked at Alton and said something in a strange, guttural language consisting largely of growls and deep sounds Alton suspected human vocal cords couldn't replicate.

"Damn it. Should have known we wouldn't just magically speak the same language. Joyeuse, get to work on a translation routine, stat!"

"Aye, sir."

Though Alton knew it was hopeless, he turned to the screen and addressed the alien. "Greetings. Did you receive our message? It's a bit dated, but as good a first contact protocol as any we have."

The alien looked at him inquisitively and responded in its own language. Alton, obviously, had no idea what it was saying, but it sounded promising. "I'm sorry, I can't understand you right now. Our ship's computer is creating a translation program, though; when it's done, we'll be able to speak to each other. Can you tell me why your ship is damaged?" As he spoke, he brought up a graphic of their ship.

It growled something out, sounding angry. Oops...maybe that was the wrong thing to show it at this point...

"Translation routine complete!" said Joyeuse finally.

"Took you long enough," Alton muttered. He turned back to the display. "All right, can you understand me now?"

The alien spoke; Joyeuse rendered its voice as a rich baritone with

an undertone of surprise. "Yes. How is it you were able to do such a thing?"

"Our ship's AI created a translation program. One moment, he'll send you a transcript of our previous conversation."

Joyeuse did so.

The alien nodded in understanding. "Come, dock with the Divine Radiance. Here we can have a more detailed discussion."

\* \* \*

><p>AN: What follows is the same incident from Rtas's POV. The parallels are intentional.

Aboard the Divine Radiance, all hell was about to break loose.

The heavily-damaged battlecruiser exited Slipspace approximately 18.4 light years from the nearest planet. Rtas knew their situation was dire. Plasma fires burned on many decks, the engines were in terrible shape, and worse, power was draining from their slippdrive. It was this last condition that had forced them into normal space.

"Set a course for the nearest planet. We must land and effect repairs," Rtas commanded. "If the ship is allowed to remain in this state, we may not reach the other Sangheili fleets."

"Shipmaster, we are being hailed!" called a young Sangheili operating the comms station.

"By whom? There are no ships for—"

N'tho cut him off. "Look again."

He did—and nearly fell out of his chair.

It was an alien ship. A spacefaring vessel of a non-Covenant race. And it had just deactivated a cloaking device.

Rtas gasped. "Initiate communications with its shipmaster at once."

"There is more, sir... we are receiving something," noted the comms officer, indicating a file that had appeared on the console. It opened to reveal what was undoubtedly a first-contact protocol-snatches of video and audio, music, language...

Somehow, subconsciously, Rtas had been expecting something resembling Unggoy. He mentally kicked himself. The expectation was ludicrous for any number of reasons; he had no reason to believe they should be anything like the diminutive Covenant cannon fodder.

And indeed, they... weren't.

The video was of an average-sized bipedal species with five-fingered hands and some type of fur on their heads. The tallest among them stood a little over two meters high. Their jaws were singular, and hinged rather than flexible like Sangheili mandibles. The file minimized to show Rtas the alien shipmaster.

"I would greet you in the name of the Covenant," said Rtas, "but it seems their path was leading us astray. So we Sangheili will stand before you on our own merits and deeds alone."

The alien looked at something offscreen and shouted in a flowing language (that Rtas noted was not nearly as guttural as his native Sangheili) with a slight twang that the Shipmaster guessed was an accent. Then, he turned to the screen and addressed Rtas in the same language. Rtas did not understand, of course, but it sounded promising. He responded inquisitively, "You cannot understand me, can you? No matter. Maybe there is some method we can use to communicate."

The alien said something else that sounded like a question, bringing up a graphic of the damaged Divine Radiance.

Rtas got the gist. "Those who were once our Prophets and their false servants, the Jiralhanae, are responsible for this damage," Rtas said, anger creeping into his voice. "They presume to ignore the words of the Oracle itself, and punish those who attempt to obey!"

The alien seemed intimidated, and Rtas could see why. An angered Sangheili was not the most pleasant of conversationalists. Then, a voice spoke from offscreen, and the alien shipmaster visibly relaxed. To Rtas's amazement, when he spoke again, the Sangheili could understand him.

"Took you long enough," he said to the same person he had been talking to before. "All right, can you understand me now?"

Rtas's eyes widened. "Yes. How is it you were able to do such a thing?"

"Our ship's AI created a translation program. One moment, he'll send you a transcript of our previous conversation," replied the alien. "One moment, he'll send you a transcript of our previous conversation."

Sure enough, the ship's computers received a text file moments later. Rtas perused it, then said, "Come, dock with the Divine Radiance. Here we can have a more detailed discussion."

A/N: Now almost three times longer than the previous chapter! I know I've been updating sporadically, but I have a good-sized workload for school I have to deal with. The action starts next chapter, when the Brutes arrive at Harvest... but this time, the humans are forewarned, and they have Sangheili help. Expect the battle for Harvest to be quite a bit more intense.

### 3. The Beginning

The hell that had broken loose earlier aboard the Divine Radiance and the Backstage Pass had been restrained, and their two captains were conversing in relative peace. Joyeuse had uploaded the translation suite onto Alton's neural uplink and Rtas's armor systems, allowing them to speak freely. Rtas had just finished the long and convoluted story of the history of the Covenant, as Alton

tried to comprehend what he was hearing.

The captain chuckled. "The story of humanity is a bit less... impressive."

Rtas frowned. "What did you say your race called itself?"

"Humanity, or humans. Why?"

But Rtas was already turning to one of his senior officers. "Do we still have the transcript of Thel 'Vadamee's conversation with the Oracle?"

"Yes, Shipmaster," replied the officer tersely.

"Show it to me. At once."

The officer did. Rtas scrolled through the document until he found what he was looking for. He rose slowly, and turned back to Alton. "I did not tell you why we left the Covenant, did I?"

"No. If you don't mind my saying, that's a story I'd quite like to hear."

"And hear you shall. On our capital city of High Charity, there is a Forerunner artificial intelligence that we considered an Oracle, because of its knowledge of those we worshiped as gods. Recently, through circumstances unknown to me, it conversed with a Sangheili named Thel 'Vadamee, who is now imprisoned upon High Charity. What it told us was that what we believed for generations was not only false, it was so far from the truth as to be a fairy tale. But what it also said was that there was a race living in the galaxy that would take up the Forerunners' mantle. It referred to them as Reclaimers, but it also revealed what they called themselves."

Alton was frozen in shock. "No way."

"You may see the transcript of the conversation yourself, if you wish. Thel 'Vadamee broadcasted it to every Covenant communications device within range, including ours. It was for this offense that he was, and is, imprisoned." Rtas brought up the transcript, and Joyeuse rendered it in English. Alton read over it, and did not speak for several moments. Words were inadequate to describe his situation.

For the first time, N'tho spoke up. "You see now why this matter is of such importance."

Alton found his tongue. "I do." Then he realized something. "The AI said the Covenant were planning to attack us?"

"It did. The closest planet to High Charity-and one apparently inhabited by your race-is at these coordinates."

Alton paled. "That's Harvest."

"Whatever it is named, the Covenant intend to strike there first. You must warn its populace, and we must gather allies."

"Now wait just a minute," said Alton. "Your ship's not in any shape

to go anywhere, let alone fight a battle, and its COMs are pretty obviously down. I'll give you a ride back, and when this thing is over we can bring in some big ships to tow it back for repairs."

"Perhaps you do not understand the gravity of the situation," Rtas warned. "If we do not have a powerful force opposing the Prophets and their servants when they arrive, the planet will likely be destroyed."

"Destroyed?!"

"Glassed. When the Covenant encounters a race it deems unworthy to be assimilated into its ranks, it declares war on them, and annihilates them by orbitally bombarding their planets with plasma and energy projectors. Unless you wish a similar fate to befall this planet you call 'Harvest'..."

"All right, I get the idea," said Alton, sounding spooked. "We'll take you for a ride to find the other Sangheili if you know their coordinates, but you can't stay on this ship. It's just a disaster waiting to happen."

"Agreed. But your ship is too small to transport most of the crew of a Covenant battlecruiser. Alternative arrangements will have to be made."

"I'll handle that. I have some high connections in the military. Getting transport for you shouldn't be much trouble. We'll drop the crew off at harvest and you and a few others can come with us to contact the other fleets."

"That seems like a sound plan." Rtas named six Sangheili, N'tho and five others, to accompany him to the Backstage Pass. They needed to gather their allies.

For that is what one does to prepare for a war.

End  
file.